

DISINHERITANCE OF DAUGHTERS IN PUNJAB: PAST AND PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

Punjab culturally exhibits the perfect case of gender inequality on numerous indices of Human Development. The state is notorious for one of the lowest Sex Ratio in the country, along with declining Female Work Participation Rate. The dismal state of affairs is attributed to culturally embedded patriarchal social norms that devalue girl child and women. Of all the legal rights, one pertaining to inheritance rights of daughters in the parental property has received maximum opposition given the male-dominated socio-political order. While disinheritance is the norm in Punjabi society, the Hindu Succession Act, 2005 enforcing it, falls flat on the surface itself. Writing off the shares to brothers is a well-followed tradition, forcing on women economic hardships later. In this light, the paper attempts to situate the disinheritance of daughters in a historical and cultural construct which accounts for the non-fulfillment of the legal right of inheritance. Tracing the antiquity of tradition helped in accounting the lack of social sanction for independent property rights of women in an economically agricultural state where land is the ultimate resource. Analysis reveals several reasons rendering the inheritance rights null and void and still resonates as the biggest obstacle for claiming a share in the property.

KEYWORDS: *Sex Ratio, Female Work Participation Rate, Inheritance, Hindu Succession Act, 2005*